

Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Report 2007-2008



A Message from the Chair

I am happy to report that this past year has been an outstanding year for the Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District.

Our Education and Outreach folks have been hard at work expanding the knowledge and awareness of environmental issues within the District. Offering guidance and assistance to the Batesburg-Leesville Elementary School, Joy Sullivan, helped with implementing a butterfly garden on their campus. The garden will serve as a teaching tool to better equip students with an understanding of how plant and animal relationships occur within the environment.

At our annual Awards Banquet held at T&S Farm in Leesville, South Carolina we had about 140 affiliate members, award recipients, and their family members in attendance. We recognized the Teachers of the Year, Photography Winners, Scholarship recipients, and a few others. Our Photography Contest continues to expand, thanks to Alivia Gunter.

The District was successful in our attempt to add an additional scholarship award to the Awards Program. These scholarships aid students who continue their education at the college level and enter a field of study in either Agriculture or the Natural Environment. Commissioner Rhett Bickley planned and helped host a very successful Tree Care Workshop. The Lexington and Richland Soil and Water Conservation Districts sponsored this workshop. Without our Affiliate Members, to whom we are eternally grateful, much of these Education and Outreach projects wouldn't be possible: Thank you!

Our Urban Conservation efforts include the District working with the Lexington County Council and the Lexington County Public Works Division to get the Stormwater Ordinance and Design Manual implemented to serve as regulatory guidance for new development projects within the County. The Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District participated with Richland Soil and Water Conservation District and The South Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Society in sponsoring the "Balancing Growth with Environmental Integrity" symposium.

Agriculturally speaking, we greeted our new District Conservationist, Rafael Mendez, and welcomed him into the Lexington fold.

These accomplishments are the result of the hard work and dedication of our staff and commissioners. We are looking ahead for another great year!

This is your District. Thank you for your support!

Fred Taylor

Objective One

Conservation Education

Teach the basic concepts of wise use of our natural resources through education and outreach programs, targeting students, private citizens, and units of government, in partnership with organizations involved in land development, land management, or land protection.

Commissioner Kathy Hensley

Bill Melven and Joy Sullivan have provided classroom presentations to local schools in the county covering such topics as watersheds,



point and non-point source pollution, water chemistry, soils and wildlife. Over 500 students have been reached through these programs.

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Three students from Lexington County attended the Carolina Coastal Adventure held at the Santee Cooper Somerset facility on Lake



Moultrie. The students were exposed to natural resource conservation issues facing South Carolina, while enjoying nature itself canoe-

*Pictured is Mark Cain and Jessica Taylor. Zek Kyzer was unavailable for photo.*

## District Board Meetings

The Lexington Soil and Water Conservation District Board meets at 4:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of every month except December at the USDA Service Center conference room, 123 Park Road, Lexington. The public is cordially invited to attend. For information call 359-3165, ext. 3.

ing, fishing, touring the marsh, and studying unique flora and fauna. Every year the Lexington Conservation District sponsors students in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade who are interested in the outdoors. This year's delegates were Jessica Taylor, Mark Cain, and Zek Kyzer, all 9<sup>th</sup> graders at Gilbert High School.

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In October of 2007, two teachers from Batesburg-Leesville Elementary School (BLES) contacted the Conservation District wanting help establishing an outdoor classroom, but one which was also a butterfly garden.

By February of 2008, Joy Sullivan, DNR Program Coordinator, had developed a brochure, a garden/classroom design with a plant list, and secured a \$500 mini-grant from the Lexington Conservation District to get them started. The two teachers; Myra Davenport and Julie Ruff, went to local nurseries and businesses for support and received numerous plant donations, railroad ties and rip-rap. The project has already received approximately \$3,000 in donations. The State Neighbors section also interviewed the teachers and ran an article about the project.

Work has continued, but the project won't be completed until the Spring of 2009. The outdoor classroom will be used by the entire school and will benefit students and teachers alike. The area will soon be an inviting habitat with splashes of color and full of winged activity. If you would like to donate to this project, please contact Joy Sullivan at 359-3165 ext. 3, or one of the teachers at the school at 532-1155.

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This year, the district offered two scholarships. The scholarships were in the amounts of \$1,000 and \$500. They were available to senior high school students in Lexington County interested in pursuing careers in the conservation field.

William "Will" Amick, a senior, who attended Lexington High School, was the recipient of the \$1,000 scholarship. He has served as President and Reporter of the Lexington Technology Center FFA Chapter, and is a member of the Boy Scouts of America, the Order of the Arrow. He has participated in conservation efforts through the FFA and



*Will accepting scholarship from Brent Weaver*

Boy Scouts, where he has actively participated in protecting land from erosion. Will has been accepted to Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Georgia, majoring in Horticulture. His proud parents are Blake and Dell Amick, of Lexington.

Samantha Mack, a senior, who attended Gilbert High School, was the recipient of the \$500 scholarship. She has served as the Reporter of the Gilbert FFA Chapter and the Gilbert Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Chapter. She was very active in both chapters, where she competed in state and national HOSA competitions, as well as area, state, and national FFA competitions. She has learned the importance of soil, water, plants, and animals through her studies in her Agricultural Science and Environmental and Natural Resource classes. Samantha plans to major in Horticultural Technology at Spartanburg Community College. Her proud parents are Timothy and Pamela Mack of Lexington.



*Brent Weaver presenting Samantha her scholarship.*

Will and Samantha were presented their scholarships at the District's Annual Awards Banquet on Thursday, May 15th at T&S Farms in Leesville.

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The Annual Photography Contest was held again this year. It marked the sixth year the contest was held. There are two divisions in which students compete, Division I is for students in Grades 9th-12th and Division II is for students in Grades 6th-8th. The categories in which students enter photos are Trees and Plants, Landscapes, Wildlife, and Rural Life. Photos are judged on composition, originality, and effectiveness of conveying the theme of the category. Judges for this year were Mr. Von Snelgrove and Mrs. Joy Sullivan.

Winners in **Division I** are as follows. Shea McSween of Lexington, won first place in the **Trees and Plants** category with his "White Mushrooms", followed by Rose Cisneros of Lexington, receiving second place with her "The Calm Before", and Victoria Unthank of West Columbia, receiving honorable mention with her "Flaming Orchid"

photo. Jessie Gold of Gilbert, won first place in the **Landscapes** category with "Clouds Leaking Rust" photo, followed by Carmen Geiger of Pelion, receiving second place with her "Joyful



Photo Winners - Division I - Left to right: Shea McSween, Rose Cisneros, Jessie Gold, Trey Dendrinis, Meghan Gunwall, Carmen Geiger, & Alec Bruner. Winners not pictured are Victoria Unthank, Nick Rypkema, Corey Clamp, & Hannah Duell.

Sound”, and Corey Clamp of Gilbert, receiving honorable mention with his “Endless Pathway” photo. Nick Rypkema of Lexington, won first place in the **Wildlife** category with his “Dragonfly”, followed by Meghan Gunwall of Lexington, receiving second place with her “Colorful Carolina”, and Shea McSween of Lexington, receiving honorable mention for his “Beatle Study 1” photo. Alec Bruner of Batesburg-Leesville, won first place in the **Rural Life** category with her “Shattered Memories”, followed by Hannah Duell of Lexington receiving second place with her “Retired”, and Trey Dendinos of Lexington, receiving honorable mention with his “Days Gone By” photo.

Winners for **Division II** are as follows. Ally Taylor of Gilbert, won first place in the **Trees and Plants** category with her “Jazzy Jasmine”, followed by Rosey Davis of Batesburg-Leesville, receiving second place with her “Snow Drops”, and Lauren Yarberough of Batesburg-Leesville, receiving honorable mention with her “Frilly Fungi” photo. Ally Taylor of Gilbert, won first place in the **Landscapes** category with her “A Country Walk” photo, followed by Brooke Craft of Lexington, receiving second place with her “Edge of the Rye”, and Jenna Kleckley of Lexington, receiving honorable mention with her “Peachtree Rock Waterfall” photo. Lauren Yarberough of Batesburg-Leesville, won first place in the **Wildlife** category with her “Parking Lot Gathering”, followed by Brianna Deller of West Columbia, receiving second place with her “Lone Ranger”, and Jordan Sommer of Lexington, receiving honorable mention for her “A Forgotten Friend” photo. Jordan Sommer of Lexington, won first place in the **Rural Life** category with her “Laid



Photo Winners-Division II --- Left to right: Rosey Davis, Lauren Yarberough, Brooke Craft, Jordan Sommer, Brianna Deller, Nicole Garrison, Ally Taylor, and Jenna Kleckley. Not pictured is Hunter Moore.

Off”, followed by Nicole Garrison of Lexington receiving second place with her “Deserted”, and Hunter Moore of Cayce, receiving honorable mention with his “Scotty’s Duchess Dilemma” photo.

Each first place winner received a \$50 cash award, each second place winner received a \$25 cash award, and each honorable mention winner received a magazine subscription to the *S.C. Wildlife Magazine*, as well as a certificate. Winners received their awards at the District’s Annual Banquet that was held on Thursday, May 15th at T&S

Farms. The winning photos were displayed at the annual banquet, as well as on the district’s website at www.lexswcd.org. Awards are made possible by our wonderful affiliate members’ donations.

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Each year one of the subject’s of the Envirothon changes. There’s always forestry, wildlife, soils and aquatics, but the fifth topic changes based on the host state’s preference. The 2008 topic, chosen by Arizona, was Recreational Impacts on Natural Resources.

Coaches began studying this topic back in February when the Coaches’ Training was held. Bryn Harmer with the State Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism was the station manager who developed the oral presentation scenario and the final exam.



*Chapin’s Envirothon Team* all areas, competing with teams from across the state. The competition, as challenging as it is, is a place where some students step up to the plate and show their coaches just how much they’ve retained. Awards are given based on station highest score and scholarships on overall highest score.

Lisa Ruth, a coach from Chapin High School, taught her students well. Her team of four girls had the highest score at the Forestry station, and came in 6<sup>th</sup> place overall. Spartanburg High School had two teams, both of which took first and second places. Strom Thurmond’s FFA team from Edgefield came in third place.



The Spartanburg team will go on to compete in the Canon North American competition to be held from July 28<sup>th</sup> until August 3<sup>rd</sup> in Flagstaff, Arizona. They will compete with teams from across the US and Canada.

*Spartanburg’s Team*

For more information about the Envirothon and how you can support this environmental program, please visit the website at [www.dnr.sc.gov/education/Envirothon](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/education/Envirothon).

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***"Conservation is a state of harmony
between men and land."***

Aldo Leopold

Conservation Teacher of the Year Award was presented to Mrs. Myra Davenport and Mrs. Julie Ruff, a teacher team from Batesburg-Leesville Elementary School. Dr. Darlene Stephens, Principal at B-L Elementary School submitted Mrs. Davenport and Mrs. Ruff nominations. Dr. Stephens said both teachers have been pioneers for conservation education at B-L Elementary School, as well as in their community. Together, they have worked to create a successful school recycling program, as well as create a butterfly and vermin-composting area that will serve as an outdoor classroom for students to enjoy real world experiences, while learning. Mrs. Davenport and Mrs. Ruff's efforts to educate others about the importance of conservation are far reaching and long lasting.



Julie, left, and Myra, right

Mr. Tommy Harmon, Agricultural Education Teacher and FFA Advisor, at the Lexington Technology Center was awarded the 2008 Environmental Education Award. He



Tommy Harmon and Dwight Davis

has been instrumental in educating Lexington's youth about agriculture and natural resources, and how they fit into and benefit our daily lives. He started teaching in 1980. Since then, he has taught students

not only about agriculture and natural resources, but how to work together as a team and how to be leaders. Through his efforts, knowledge, and wisdom; he has had numerous state winning FFA Career Development Event Teams, as well as numerous state FFA Officers. We are proud of Mr. Harmon and all of his accomplishments in his years of teaching!

The district helped co-sponsor a workshop on the selection and care of trees. It was conducted at Lexington Town Hall on January 29th. The program was coordinated by Rhett Bickley, Commissioner of the Lexington SWCD and the Landscape Administrator with Lexington County, with assistance from the Lexington County Community Development and the SC Forestry Commission.

The program was designed for local officials and staff who have responsibility for supervising ordinances relating to landscaping and staff charged with vegetation and plant maintenance.

Nearly 60 people attended the workshop including repre-

sentatives from Lexington, West Columbia, Irmo, Chapin, Columbia and Gilbert. Master Gardeners and individuals from private contracting firms were also in attendance. Continuing Education Credits by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) were awarded for those certified arborists attending.

Course material included species selection, planting techniques and proper pruning. Irmo's very successful urban forestry and beautification efforts were highlighted, as well as Lexington County's efforts to meet EPA mandated NPDES water management requirements.



"Natural Symmetry". Photo by Rebekah Muckenfuss. Youth Photography Participant.

Objective Two

Conservation in Urban and Developing Communities

Help developers and property owners plan and design onsite stormwater infiltration practices to better control erosion, slow runoff, protect and improve water quality, and protect lives and property downstream.

Commissioner Rhett Bickley

Thanks to a lot of groups, organizations and agencies, a lot of progress has been made this year with stormwater management. The Conservation District has continued to co-sponsor seminars with the Richland Conservation District to help citizens learn more about the Low Impact Development (LID) planning concepts. The district was requested by the Saluda Hill Landscape Company for assistance with LID practices and principles. Individual homeowners are wanting to learn more about Bioretention Cells and Rain Gardens.

More than 40 calls came from individuals and subdivisions having storm water runoff problems. Site visits were made to assess the situation and recommend possible solutions. Some situations took several visits to get sediment movement under control.

Each year the Conservation District gives an Environmental Protection and Water Quality Award to an outstanding organization or individual. This year's Environ-

mental Protection Award was presented to Mrs. Synithia Williams and Ms. Sheri Armstrong for their outstanding efforts in protecting our natural resources through implementing storm water changes and educating the general public about stormwater in general.



Sherri Armstrong & Fred Taylor

Ms. Williams and Ms. Armstrong work in the Stormwater Division of Lexington County Public Works. Ms. Williams is the Environmental Coordinator, and Ms.



Synithia Williams and Fred Taylor

Armstrong is the Stormwater Manager, in the Stormwater Division. Both ladies have been instrumental in getting the new Stormwater Ordinance and Development Design Manual written, as well as making numerous presentations to various groups about stormwater and the problems it causes.

Ms. Williams and Ms. Armstrong received their awards at the district's annual banquet on May 15, 2008 at T&S Farms. They were again recognized on May 27, 2008 in front of the members of the Lexington County Council at the Lexington County Council meeting.

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The 2008 Special Recognition Award was awarded to the Lexington County Council for their efforts in protecting our natural resources. The district recognizes and appreciates the Lexington County Council for adopting the Stormwater Management Ordinance and The Land Development Manual to protect the quality of soil and water resources.

*Billy Derrick, Chair,  
Lexington County Council,  
and Fred Taylor, Chair,  
Lexington SWCD*



***"What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another."***

***Gandhi***

## Objective Three

### Conservation in Rural Communities

**Plan and put on the ground conservation systems that help agricultural producers and others improve both surface and ground water quality, improve soil health, and develop or protect wildlife habitat.**

### **Commissioner Dwight Davis**

Requests for technical assistance from rural residents involved horse lots, wetlands, drainage, mining, and managing fish ponds. Contacts from pond owners amounted to more than 65 calls. Aquatic plant management was the main problem. The Conservation District worked with DNR biologists with noxious aquatic plant problems in the county.

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This past year was a busy year for our office. Shawn Worley, District Conservationist (DC) for Edgefield and Hugh Smith, DC for Saluda, were our acting DC's until our new District Conservationist arrived in February. As Rafael Mendez, our new DC arrived, LaKeisha Hill, our Soil Conservationist, departed to become the new DC in York. Tommy Stone, our Conservation Technician, weathered the changes, while continuing to put conservation on the ground. Below is a summary of the work that was accomplished by the staff.



Rafael Mendez, District Conservationist for Lexington

NRCS Performance Measure for Lexington County	Goal	Total Progress	Prog. %
Conservation Plans Written (acres)	3,015	2,812	93
Cropland with Conservation Applied to Improve Soil Quality (acres)	680	1,041	153
Land with Conservation Applied to Improve Water Quality (acres)	2, 345	1,638	70
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP) Written (number)	3	5	167
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP) Applied (number)	5	6	120
Grazing and Forest Land with Conservation Applied to Protect and Improve the Resource Base (acres)	350	684	195
Non-Federal Land with Conservation Applied to Improve Fish and Wildlife Habitat Quality (acres)	570	355	92

District Commissioners and Staff

Commissioners:

Fred Taylor, Chairman
Rhett Bickley
Dwight Davis
Kathy Hensley
Larry Nates

Associate Commissioners

Raymond Caughman
Jim Low
Allan Risinger
Brent Weaver

Chaplain:

Reverend Garth Hill

District Staff:

Bill Melven, Dist. Manager
Alivia Gunter, Admin. Asst.

NRCS Staff:

Rafael Méndez,
District Conservationist
Tommy Stone,
Conservation Technician

OCIO-ITS Staff:

Randy Taylor, IT Specialist

DNR-LW&CD Staff:

Joy Sullivan,
Program Coordinator

For assistance contact us at:
(803) 359-3165 ext. 3.

Web Address:

<http://www.lexswcd.org>



Meet our District Commissioners!

From left to right: Larry Nates, Dwight Davis, Fred Taylor, Kathy Hensley, and Rhett Bickley



"Clouds Leaking Rust" by Jessie Gold
1st Place, Landscapes - Division I



"Frilly Fungi" by Lauren Yarberough
Honorable Mention, Trees and Plants - Division II



"Colorful Carolina" by Meghan Gunwall
2nd Place, Wildlife - Division I



"Deserted" by Nicole Garrison
2nd Place, Rural Life - Division II